It is, therefore, not true that the Royal Government of Bhutan is implementing this project to dump the product into India.

(c) Does not arise.

INDO-PAK TRADE RELATIONS

2351. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH : (a) whether it is fact that Pakistan sees benefiets of increased trading with India :

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto ;

(c) what is Government strategy for trading with Pakistan in future with details thereof ; and

(d) what are the items of exports and imports that would be involved in such a mutual trading and what volume of trade in terms of rupee is being envisaged by Government in between the two countries ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) to (d) Pakistan imports from India are restricted to Government of Pakistan's list of 570 items importable from India. However, in September, 1993, Government of Pakistan allowed import of 300,000 tonnes of cement from the private sector on a one time basis from India. Cement is not allowed in Government of Pakistan's list of 570 items approved for import from India. Government of India has been reiterating to have reciprocal status of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) from Govt. of Pakistan to the Indian Exporters in accordance with their obligations under GATT but no favourable response has been received so far. Both India and Pakistan are signatories to the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA). The Agreement, envisaged as a first step towards higher levels of trade and economic cooperation in the region, is limited to merchandise trade. The process of obtaining information on items of export interest by the contracting parties to SAPTA is underway. No such list has been received from Pakistan as yet. No target for bilateral trade has been fixed.

MULTINATIONAL COMPANY COMMITTING "GENE PIRACY"

2352. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a multinational company. W. R. Grace is trying to take control of the 'neem' trees natural properties and committing an act of "gene piracy" if so, details thereof ;

(b) whether it is fact that above him named company holds patents in the US for 'Margosam-O' derived from the neem tree and also sold as 'Bioneem'; if so, the details thereof ;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the company is building upon the traditional knowledge of Indian farmers and not rewarding knowledge in any way ; and

(d) if so, what steps Government have taken or is going to take in this respect with details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) to (d) The company W.R. Grace is reported to be holding three patents in the USA in respect of neem seed extract and compositions containing neem seed extract. It is not known whether these patents for "Margosam-O" and whether "Margosam-O" is sold as "Bioneem". India has signed the biodiversity convention which provides that the source of the genetic resource shall share in the proceeds of the research done on that resource and in the patent if a given to the results of the research. Further, Government are also in the process of devising legislation for the protection of plant breeders' rights.

QUOTA ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS EXPORTER TO RUSSIA

2353. DR. NUANIHAL SINGH :
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA :
SHRI RAJANI RANJAN SAHU :

SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJI RAO SHINDE :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to impose quota on agricultural products and essential commodities export to Russia under the 'debt repayment mechanism', if so, what are the details thereof ;

(b) whether there is any plan to earn hard currency by exporting surplus commodities to Russia beyond this 'debt repayment mechanism' if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether it is a act that an inter-bank agreement has been signed between Russian Central Bank and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) banning third-party trading of products exported under this mechanism and if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) No Sir. However, various aspects of 'debt repayment mechanism' which is of a recent origin are being continuously reviewed and evolved, in line with the relevant understandings between India and Russia.

(b) No Sir. However, trade between the two countries is possible both in hard currency and as per the 'debt repayment mechanism'.

(c) The Reserve Bank of India and the Bank for Foreign Economic Affairs of the USSR signed an inter-bank agreement in September 1993 pertaining to the banking procedures in connection with the 'debt repayment mechanism'.

CHANGES IN CENTRAL EXCISE AND CUSTOMS RELATING TO EXPORTS

2354. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Union Finance Minister has announced and assured the exporters that all existing irritants and bottlenecks with Central Excise and customs relating to exports will be removed;

(b) if so, to what extent this will satisfy the exporters ;

(c) whether exporters have also made any suggestions for removing the hurdles ; and

(d) if so, how many of them have been removed so far ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) to (b) The Finance Minister has been emphasising in his meetings with various trade associations the need to improve our export performance wherein it has also been observed by him that any irritants and bottlenecks with regard to central excise and customs relating to exports would be removed. Suggestions are received from time to time from individuals as also from the various exporting organisations for simplification of customs and central excise procedures. The suggestions so received are considered and action taken to simplify the procedures. Review of customs and excise procedures is a continuous exercise.

U.S. RESTRICTIONS ON IMPORT OF GOODS INVOLVING CHILD LABOUR

2355. SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) what are the effects on our export to USA on items like carpets etc. because of the restrictions imposed by U.S.A. on import of goods in whose manufacture child labour was involved ; and

(b) what steps have been taken to check the adverse effect on our export items by seeking concessions from U.S.A. and exploring alternate market ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a)